

Components of Culture

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- Values
- Norms
- Symbols
- Language

Components of culture

1. Values – Collective concept² of what is good, bad, desirable, proper, and improper and that serve as broad guidelines for social living.

- Values indicate what people find important and morally right (or wrong)
- Respect for parents, elders
- Cleanliness
- Generosity
- Values are broad principles that support beliefs.
- **Beliefs** are specific thoughts or ideas that people hold to be true.

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2. Norms; rules developed by a group of people that specify how people must, should, may, should not and must not behave in various situations.

- These are rules and expectations by which a society guides the behavior of its members.

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- There are two aspects of norms
 - **PROSCRIPTIVE**
 - should not and must not ; prohibited
 - Laws that prohibit us from driving over the speed limit
 - **PRESCRIPTIVE**
 - must, should, may ; prescribed like medicine
 - Persons making a certain amount of money are expected to file a tax return and pay any taxes they owe.

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a) **Folkways** are informal norms or everyday customs that may be violated without serious consequences within a particular culture.

- norms of routine or casual interaction (ex. Shaking hands, eating styles, saying excuse me)

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b) Mores –(pronounced MOR-ays)

- Mores norms that are widely observed and have great moral significance*. Often breaking norms lead to being outcast or imprisonment (ex. Incest, rape, murder) are strict norms that control moral and ethical behavior.
- **Laws*** are formal, standardized norms that have been enacted by legislatures and are enforced by formal sanctions.

Because mores are based on cultural values and are considered to be crucial to the well-being of the group, violators are subject to more severe negative sanctions/ punishments (such as ridicule, loss of employment, or imprisonment) Laws may be

Law- Written codes that control the behaviour of people;

Laws may be either civil or criminal. Civil law deals with disputes among persons or groups while Criminal law deals with public safety and wellbeing.

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#Taboos are mores specifying what actions are prohibited in a culture.

Taboos are mores so strong that their violation is considered to be extremely offensive and even unmentionable.

- **Taboo** meaning a culture absolutely forbids them.
- Eating human flesh - cannibalism
- Incest

Taboos for Muslims:

Eating pork

Gambling

Consumption of Alcohol/ intoxicants

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3. Symbols:

A symbol is an object, word, or action that stands for something else.

- Symbol is anything that carries a particular meaning recognized by people who share a culture (a flag, a word, a flashing red light, a raised fist, an animal etc).

- Symbols help us communicate ideas. A siren is a symbol that denotes an emergency situation and sends the message to clear the way immediately.
- Symbols mean different things to different people, which is why it is impossible to hypothesize how a specific culture will symbolize something. In European culture the color black has come to symbolize death and is worn at funerals. In other cultures, Asian for example, white often symbolizes death and is worn at funerals.

- Non-verbal gestures can be very “symbolic” and diverse.

In Argentina, rotating one’s index finger around the front of the ear means “You have a telephone call,” but in the United States it usually suggests that a person is “crazy” (Axtell, 1991). Similarly, making a circle with your thumb and index fi nger indicates “OK” in the United States, but in Tunisia it means “I’ll kill you!” (Samovar and Porter, 1991).



1. Peace Symbol: A Dove
2. Peace Symbol: anti-nuclear emblem
3. Health Care
4. A nazar is an eye-shaped amulet, Turkish believes that it protects against the evil eye.